

HABIBI INTERNATIONAL

ANNUAL
REPORT
2023



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THE HABIBI FAMILY

A WORD FROM OUR CEO



2023 proved to be another turbulent year in the Middle East. Several earth-shattering events rocked the region, but the one that impacted me the most was the massive earthquake along the Syrian-Türkiye border.

On February 6, 2023 the first 7.8-magnitude earthquake and the subsequent 7.7-magnitude aftershock struck the region, resulting in about 60,000 fatalities and over 120,000 casualties. Among all the cities that were affected, Aleppo in Syria, as well as Antakya, the ancient Antioch, were the hardest hit. I first visited Aleppo and Antakya in March, and then again in June and November. What I witnessed shook me to the core, and I was determined to do something to help. But three months before the earthquake, unbeknownst to me at that time, I was already being prepared to respond to this crisis.

On November 17, 2022, I was involved in a serious car accident that almost took my life. That evening, I was on my way to dinner with some close associates when I drove myself into a 15-20 meter-deep ravine while trying to avoid slamming into the car in front of me. My car was totaled as it landed upside down in the ditch. My entire body was aching as I hung in mid-air by the seatbelt while frantically trying to unbuckle myself with no success. I waited anxiously and helplessly in complete darkness, wondering if I would be rescued.

So when news of the earthquakes hit, I felt an instant connection with those buried under the rubble. Even though I had only waited half an hour, I could imagine the anguish and hopelessness that they must have felt, having been trapped for days. In the days that followed, I heard a still small voice: *"Go and respond to the earthquake."*

In the months since, we have begun work with various partners in Syria and Türkiye to support the relief and rebuilding of lives of those displaced by the disaster. At the same time, we have not stopped journeying with the many whose lives remain in limbo in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Our center in Berseve 2 Camp and other services in three other camps continue to touch many lives.

In this annual report, you will find snapshots of what the Habibi family has done together in 2023. They remind us of the many needs but also opportunities to make a difference in this region. They are also a testament to the resilience of many of our forcibly displaced friends.

As we look forward to 2024, we are also excited about plans to start a Special Needs Center in the city of Zakho with a local partner, the possibility to work in Sinjar, and expanding our work amongst those affected by the earthquake. Do stay tuned for more news, and I invite you to continue with us in this journey.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Willy Tan', written in a cursive style.

WILLY TAN
CEO



WHO WE ARE

HABIBI INTERNATIONAL

We journey with forcibly displaced communities towards holistic health.

Mission:

Habibi International is a nonprofit organization that seeks to transform the lives of refugees and internally displaced persons in the Middle East through humanitarian relief and sustainable development in partnerships with like-minded entities.

Vision:

To see transforming communities birthed among the persecuted and displaced in the Middle East.

OUR VALUES

We Follow Jesus

We take our cue from someone who was once a refugee and who understands suffering intimately. His message of hope, healing and freedom is what keeps us going. His approach of doing life with people—including those that society despised or did not protect—guides ours.

We Value People

We're not here to run a program or complete a project—we're here to come alongside friends who have tremendous dignity and worth.

We Pursue Partnerships

We can't take on the world's immense challenges alone, neither are we supposed to. We believe that everyone brings unique strengths to the table, and collaborations with others—especially local communities—are our best shot at moving the needle on issues.



OUR VALUES

We Are Pioneers

We aren't afraid to do what others have not done before. We create platforms so that others can also serve.

We Respect Local Cultures

We are constantly learning from and amazed by the beauty and diversity of the cultures we get to encounter. Our local team is a microcosm of the multicultural society we work in, with all ethnicities and faiths.

We Practice Servant Leadership

We recognize that some of the areas we work in have painful histories of exploitation. We are here not to take but to give, not to be served but to serve.



PHYSICAL HEALTH

MEDICAL

33

surgeries performed, including orthopedic (with HIS Foundation) and uro/gynecology (with Surgical Education International)

913

rehabilitation sessions and home visits that involved post-surgical wound care, follow-up, pain clinic, and physical therapy

494

screened and dispensed corrective and reading **eyeglasses**

236

participants engaged in **community health education** sessions, covering topics such as first aid, women's health, and managing chronic illness and pain

174

clinical **consultations** and **home visits**

4

patients in a pilot urinary incontinence clinic to provide **Posterior Tibial Nerve Stimulation treatment** to those with overactive bladders





1

new dental clinic in Chamishku Camp opened in partnership with Heevie Organization

DENTAL



200

children attended oral hygiene education sessions



1,643

individuals screened

2,351

patients treated through extractions, fillings, root canals, and scaling and polishing

MENTAL HEALTH

MENTAL HEALTH & PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT

356

case sessions as part of journeying with **38** individuals, involving **individual counseling, play therapy, and home visits**

30

women participated in **3** runs of **Shine**, a 10-week personal development and group mentoring program

5

young women developed as **peer leaders** to motivate and support others in the Shine program

15

women provided **livelihood opportunities**, in partnership with MadRoaster (Singapore)

18

women supported with new skills through **crochet classes**



COUNSELING

From around the middle of the year, we noticed an increasing number of women walking into our center to request “sessions”, meaning counseling and therapy. Prior to this, many women wanted only medication to ease their pain. But now, not only are more women asking for counseling support, but they are also approaching us with a larger spectrum of issues, such as marital problems and family violence. There was even a young father who wanted support with anger management. This has stretched our lean MHPSS team, but is also an encouraging indicator that we are gaining trust in the community.

Amongst one of the women who approached us was N, an ISIS survivor who had been held in captivity for 5 years. Though she received much support in the initial 2 years of returning, we were the first she shared her traumatic experiences with. In the months we have journeyed together thus far, many times it felt like we were on holy ground, gifted with a sacred trust from her. I will never forget how we just sat and cried together on August 3, 2023, the anniversary of the genocide. N, with so many young women like her, went through atrocities that no human should ever have to go through.

But we have begun to see healing. Little by little, a glow has been returning to her eyes. In September 2023, we celebrated the anniversary of the day that she escaped captivity. It was like a second birth.

- Jeslyn, Program Manager/Senior Social Worker



SOCIAL HEALTH

EDUCATION

374

children (aged 7-14 years) progressed through 4 three-month-long levels of **Sing Your English**

155

youths and young adults completed 1 or more two-month-long levels of **English courses**

50

students participated in summer **English Corner**, a conversational English program with native English speakers


59

women attended **Arabic literacy and numeracy** classes, over 5 six-to-ten-week runs

4

students from across the four camps in Zakho received our inaugural **higher education scholarship**





44

participants in 3 rounds
of two-month-long
computer literacy
courses



40

participants in **other**
computer courses
(e.g. Business x Digital
Media, Google Sheets)



22

students in a three-month-long
special needs education
program pilot, providing them
with special needs education
and physical therapy

ARABIC LITERACY

In my community, I know many women who never had the opportunity to learn how to read or write in Arabic. They face many challenges, for example, when they go to the doctor, or when their children go to school and they don't know how to help them. I thought to myself: "I know how to read and write in Arabic. Why don't I teach them?"

I am really so happy that I can teach this class. When I see that the women catch what I am trying to explain to them, I feel so proud of them.

One of my students shared that before this, she could not read any of the ingredients on the food packets in the shop. But now she is able to. Another of my students said, "Now I can finally read the signs in the clinic so I know which room to go to. I can also read and address my doctor by name."

- Hind, Program Coordinator



SCHOLARSHIPS

"I want to be a brain surgeon," Fatima declared, when we asked her what her dream was. Back in high school, a Turkish medical drama had captivated her, and she decided she too would become a doctor. This led to many late nights and early mornings of intense study for the high stakes final year exams, and eventually graduating as the top student in Berseve Camp High School. Fatima's stellar grades meant that she would not only be the first ever in her family to attend university, but also that she landed a coveted spot in medical school. However, her family was struggling financially and it was uncertain if they could actually support her through the six-year course.

It was students like Fatima that led us to launch the Habibi Higher Education Scholarship. The scholarship provides students who have financial need - and who display character, potential, and good academic grades - a monthly allowance throughout their higher education. We hope that this allows them to continue and complete their education, and relieve them of the stress of making ends meet while at it.

After going through many applications, interviews, home visits, and discussions with school teachers and camp management, we selected four students - living in each of the four camps in Zakho - to receive the scholarship.

It's been such a joy to watch these four youth grow, even over just the past few months! They have also been sharing how excited they are to volunteer with us over their upcoming summer holidays to serve their own communities. But in an even longer horizon, we are excited at how we get to walk with future leaders of these communities!

- Heidi, Director of Operations





112

activities in the SuperAdobe hall, from community events to educational programs for children

COMMUNITY CENTER



3,070

participants in SuperAdobe hall events and programming



4

grants provided to camp residents to organize and conduct **summer projects** for their own community

CENTER PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN

Being at our center after 1pm used to be a hair-pulling experience because of the many children clamoring at the gate - some shouting, banging, and even climbing over to get in. On one hand, it was an affirmation of how well-received the center is in the camp. On the other, it was becoming disruptive for our other programs and clients/patients.



With the expansion of our center team, we have been able to implement a different schedule: one hour of supervised homework club, followed by another hour of free play - only for those who have attended the preceding study hour. Since then, the children have learnt to line up quietly at the gate, clutching their textbooks as their "tickets" for entry, and to study seriously inside the hall.

- Ruth, Program Manager/Senior Social Worker



ECONOMIC HEALTH

EARTHQUAKE RELIEF

In the wake of the February 2023 Türkiye-Syria earthquake, we provided **immediate relief and aid** (e.g. food packages, hygiene and medical supplies, blankets) in:

- Aleppo (Syria) with ICARE NGO
- Jableh (Syria) with Emmanuel Baptist Church (Homs)
- Antakya (Türkiye) with Antakya Christian Church
- Samandağ (Türkiye) with Samandağ Rock Church



We also supported the set-up and furnishing of **temporary shelters**:

- In Syria, the full completion and furnishing of a 20-room **shelter facility** for about 15 to 20 families or 100 adults and children from Aleppo whose homes are completely destroyed, with Jesus Light of the World Church (Aleppo)
- In Türkiye, **shelters** (e.g. tents, containers, wooden houses) and **household items** (e.g. beds, washing machines, heaters), with Samandağ Rock Church

POST-EARTHQUAKE NEEDS

We met a family that lived through the civil war in Syria. At one point, their home was only 200 meters away from an attack from ISIS. But the father of the household, a pastor, shared with us, "The 60 seconds of the earthquake was equal to 12 years of war... Because you think you are safe in your house, but now you are afraid. The house is not safe. Everyone is fearful."

After this same pastor, his family, and other members of his church went to Aleppo to bring food to those living on the street, the pastor shared, "Our hearts are full of pain because there are so many people who need help, but not enough aid. In Aleppo, people kept asking me for more aid. I kept telling my heart to 'shut up, shut up' because I know I only have a little to give." The need is so great. He told us, "This situation is not going to be weeks or months, but years."

Likewise in Antakya and Samandağ in Türkiye, the devastation was tremendous. In one of our follow-up trips at the end of 2023, we were sad to see so much rubble still lining the streets, and many still living out of containers, tents, and other temporary shelters. Syrian refugees in the area have also been hit doubly hard, as many are now displaced twice over.

At the same time, we have been heartened by the generous outpouring of support from Singapore and the US, so that we were able to in turn help our neighbors, Syria and Türkiye, especially in areas we assessed did not receive as much support.

- Jonathan, Director of Projects
Heidi, Director of Operations



112

individuals provided with
warm winter clothes

50

street lights provided for
Berseve 1 Camp

Supported burn victims
from a big fire at Al-
Hamdaniya (Nineveh)
with medicine and food.



SPECIAL NEEDS

Over the past few years, through our surgical, rehabilitation, and MHPSS services, we have come to know, love, and serve many children with special needs. Even as the forcibly displaced are already hidden at the margins of society, these children are further hidden within their homes, many unable or ashamed to go to public school.

We realized that one missing piece on how we were supporting these children was through special needs education. We were thus excited to be able to launch a pilot program for 22 children from Chamishku Camp over the summer of 2023. Many of these children made wonderful progress. Their parents and caregivers were also happy to receive some respite every day, as well as learning on how to guide their children.

We have seen how it would be beneficial to bring together holistic services for the children - through education, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and care for the families - in a single location. In 2024, we are thus looking to launch a Special Needs Center in Zakho, in partnership with a national NGO.

PLANNED FUTURE INITIATIVES

EARTHQUAKE RELIEF

Even as the world has moved on, much-needed post-earthquake relief continues in Syria and Türkiye. Habibi International will be deepening our work in Samandağ in particular. Rebuilding has been slow. We are thus supporting a team that is building wooden houses for families in need to move into, as well as a small self-contained village with houses and services that would support displaced families.



STAFF QUOTES



“WHAT I LIKE MOST ABOUT WORKING WITH HABIBI INTERNATIONAL IS THE FAMILY VIBE.”

–JWAN, SOCIAL WORKER

“AT HABIBI, I LEARNT HOW TO LOVE.”

–THIYAB, TEACHER



“I LOVE MY WORK HERE. EVERY WEEKEND, I LOOK FORWARD TO MONDAY TO START MY WORK, BECAUSE I MISS MY WORK!”

–ZIYAD, DENTAL ASSISTANT

“I GREW IN KNOWLEDGE AND CONFIDENCE.”

–HUDA, NURSE





@habibi_intl

THE HABIBI FAMILY

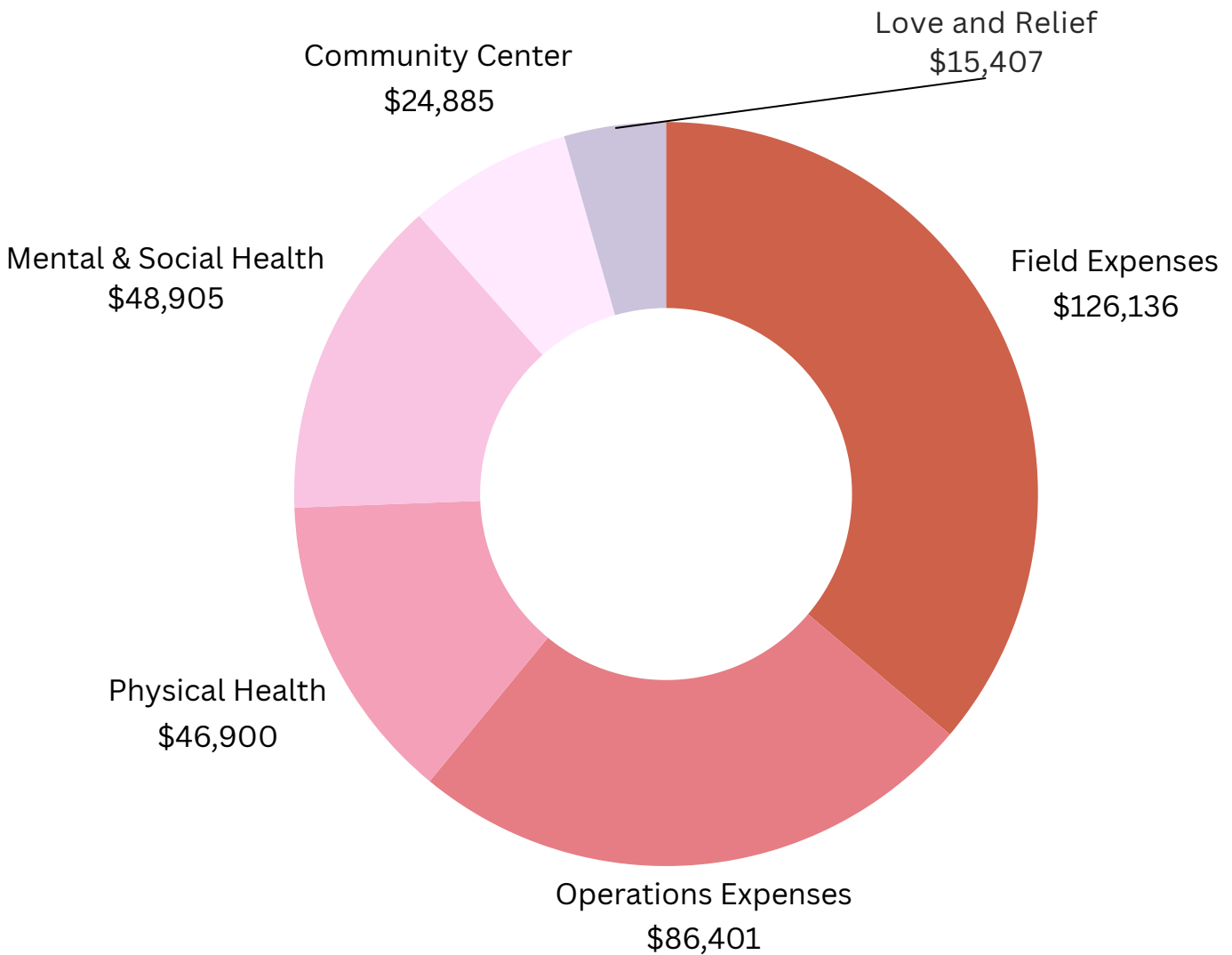


FINANCIAL UPDATE

We are celebrating a record year of generosity, both from our donors and in what we have given away! Thank you for being a vital part of our mission!

EXPENSES*

TOTAL: \$754,078



* \$405,444 of earthquake relief expenses excluded from chart

DONATIONS

TOTAL: \$743,569

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

HABIBI INTERNATIONAL BOARD MEMBERS

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Dr Eunju Chang–Physical Therapist
Hadia Khudida–Nurse
Hassan Hndko–Nurse
Huda Barakat–Nurse
Titus Lau–Nurse

Ginny Lau–Program Manager (Dental)/Dental Therapist
Dr Hassan Ali–Dentist
Dr Marwa Nasreddin–Dentist
Dr Sara Majeed–Dentist
Nazdar Khudida–Dental Assistant
Safia Hamid–Dental Assistant
Ziyad Murad–Dental Assistant

Jeslyn Koh–Program Manager (MHPSS)/Senior Social Worker
Ruth Wei–Program Manager (MHPSS)/Senior Social Worker
Yuxiang Wong–Senior Social Worker
Jwan Abdulsalam–Social Worker
Hind Seydo–Program Coordinator

Germaine Tay–Program Manager (Education)
Adlan Omer–Teacher (SYE)
Hussein Hassan–Teacher (Computer)
Rehan Dakhil–Teacher (SYE)
Saad Shivan–Teacher (SYE)
Tahseen Alo–Teacher (English for Youths)
Thiyab Ghanim–Teacher (SYE)

Shirley Lim–Special Needs Educator
Anwar Qassim–Special Needs Assistant



*Thank you to each and every one of our supporters.
None of this would be possible without your generosity.*

*If you would like to continue supporting us, scan the QR code or go to
<https://www.habibi-international.org/give>*

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